

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-11 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03

SS-20 USIA-15 COME-00 EB-11 LAB-06 SIL-01 SCCT-02

DRC-01 /142 W

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R 232100Z AUG 74

FM AMCONSUL CURACAO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1967

INFO AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMCONSUL PARAMARIBO

AMEMBASSY CARACAS

AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE

COMCARIBSEAFRON ROOSEVELT ROADS PR

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EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, PINT ELAB, NA

SUBJECT: CONDITIONS ON ST MAARTEN

FOR: ARA/ CAR - WAUCHOPE AND BURKE

REF: CURACAO 420, 422, 424, 431

1. ST MAARTEN IS NOW CALM. THE RIOT POLICE SENT FROM CURACAO HAVE BEEN WITHDRAWN. POLICE COMMISSIONER OLDENBOOM STATED THAT THE PROBLEMS OF ST MAARTEN CANNOT BE SOLVED BY THE PRESENCE OF THE RIOT POLICE BUT MUST BE NEGOTIATED LOCALLY. THE LABOR DISPUTE WITH THE JAPANESE-OWNED CURACAO PIONEERING FISHING COMPANY IS MOVING TOWARD A SETTLEMENT WITH TALKS TAKING PLACE AMONG THE COMPANY, THE UNITED FEDERATION OF THE ANTILLES (UFA), AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE COMPANY WILL REHIRE THE THIRTEEN WORKERS IT HAD DISMISSED.

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2. PERBERT MERSER, PRESIDENT OF THE MULLET BAY BEACH HOTEL, HELD A PRESS CONFERENCE ON THE 21ST OF AUGUST IN WHICH HE BLAMED WORSENING ECONOMIC CONDITIONS ON THE ISLAND ON THE LABOR DISPUTE. MERSER SAID THAT MULLET BAY HAD BEEN LOSING MONEY DURING A BAD TOURIST SEASON AND A WORSE OFF-SEASON. PUBLICITY IN THE US PRESS HAD BEEN ADVERSE AND EASTERN AIRLINES HAD ADVISED PROSPECTIVE TRAVELLERS TO IGNORE ST MAARTEN. ACCORDING TO MERSER, MULLET BAY HAS TO POSTPONE CONSTRUCTION OF A SHOPPING CENTER, HAS LAID OFF THIRTY-THREE WORKERS AND IS USING ITS REGULAR EMPLOYEES ONLY THREE DAYS OUT OF FIVE. HE CLAIMED THAT THERE WAS NO ALTERNATIVE FOR ST MAARTEN'S ECONOMIC WELL-BEING TO THE TOURIST INDUSTRY AND URGED BETTER TREATMENT OF TOURISTS AND CALM FOR THE ISLAND.

3. COMMENT: IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PREDICT IF OR WHEN ST MAARTEN WILL ERUPT AGAIN. MERSER, WITH HIS MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR HOTEL INVESTMENT, IS OF COURSE CONCERNED ABOUT THE FLOW OF TOURISTS TO HIS HIGH-PRICED PARADISE. MERSER HAS PROBABLY ALREADY MADE A FINANCIAL KILLING ON THE SALE OF CONDOMINIUMS AT MULLET BAY AND WITH HIS RELATIVELY TAX-FREE CASINO. A STOPPING OF TOURISM AND A COLLAPSE OF THE INDEBTED MULLET BAY HOTEL CORPORATION WOULD PROBABLY FORCE HIS DEPARTURE, BUT LEAVING A BANKRUPT COMPANY WITH A LARGE GROUP OF DISGRUNTLED U.S. CITIZEN INVESTORS AND MORTGAGED CONDOMINIUM OWNERS. FURTHER TROUBLES ON THE ISLAND LEADING TO A DECLINE IN TOURISM WOULD EXACERBATE THE SHAKY LABOR PEACE ON ST MAARTEN AND CREATE FOR THE GOVERNMENT AN ADDITIONAL PROBLEM OF WHAT TO DO WITH THE ESTIMATED FOUR TO FIVE THOUSAND NON-ANTILLEAN WORKERS WHO HAVE COME TO THE ISLAND TO WORK IN THE HOTEL AND CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY. IT IS SUGNIFICANT THAT PRIME MINISTER DEN UYL OF HOLLAND NOTED THE UNDESIRABLE INFLUENCE OF "RICH" AMERICANS ON THE ECONOMY AND LIFE STYLE OF THE PEOPLE OF ST MAARTEN. MERSER'S HUGE MULLET BAY GAMBLING COMPLEX BEARS MOST RESPONSIBILITY FOR BRINGING ST MAARTEN TO THIS STATE OF AFFAIRS.

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